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RUEHPB/AMEMBASSY PORT MORESBY PRIORITY 1004  
RUEHWL/AMEMBASSY WELLINGTON PRIORITY 1192

C O N F I D E N T I A L SUVA 000529

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 12/04/2016

TAGS: PREL MARR ASEC CASC FJ

SUBJECT: ACTION REQUEST: PIF EMINENT PERSONS GROUP FOR FIJI: PACOM PARTICIPATION?

REF: A. SYDNEY 1510

- 1B. SYNDEY 1511  
1C. SUVA 528 (AND PREVIOUS)

Classified By: Amb. Dinger. Sec. 1.4 (B,D).

PIF eminent persons group for Fiji

11. (C) Per ref A, a Pacific Islands Forum (PIF) ministerial meeting in Sydney last Friday proposed that an "eminent persons group" attempt to help mediate a solution to Fiji's current civil-military crisis. In EAP/ANP Director McGann's discussions with regional leaders on Saturday (ref B), the possibility of a USG participant in the eminent persons group arose, with Fiji Foreign Minister Tavola seeing merit in a senior U.S. military figure participating, someone who "speaks Bainimarama's language."

Request for senior U.S. military role: Adm. Fallon?

12. (C) PIF Secretary General Urwin phoned Monday a.m. to make further inquiry. He said that, if the Fiji Cabinet in a meeting scheduled for Tuesday affirms the "eminent persons" concept, the PIF intends to form the group ASAP. Possible members include Gen. Peter Cosgrove, Australia's Chief of Defense Force; Sata Kilman, Deputy Prime Minister of Vanuatu and a former head of Vanuatu's Mobile Force and Police Force; and New Zealand Foreign Minister Winston Peters. Urwin said he and McGann had discussed Commander PACOM, Admiral Fallon, as a possible USG participant. Urwin noted that schedules would have to be aligned, but he clearly wants the group to get started as rapidly as possible.

Embassy view

13. (C) To the extent the eminent persons group can help Bainimarama come to accept his quite limited role under Fiji's Constitution, the idea merits USG support. To date, the Commodore has made clear he sees no meaningful role for the international community in the Fiji crisis. While Bainimarama accepted last week's New Zealand effort to mediate a meeting with Qarase in Wellington, he then dismissed the meeting's outcome as "all lies" on return to Fiji. Still, from the Embassy Suva perspective, if the USG can visibly assist in the eminent-persons effort, it will at the least reaffirm U.S. efforts to help Fiji overcome its crisis; and there is always the chance that, this time, Bainimarama will actually listen.

Urgent action request

14. (C) For Washington and PACOM, please advise ASAP if Admiral Fallon, or some other senior USG military or

retired-military senior officer who knows Commodore Bainimarama, would be available on very short notice, perhaps as early as late in the current week, to participate in the PIF mediation effort.

DINGER